

The Penetration of Central Plains Culture in College English Teaching

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Abstract: Language and culture are inseparable. The inseparable relationship between language and culture makes culture and language teaching inextricably linked. The Central Plains culture represents Chinese culture to a certain extent. Hence, it is of significance to integrate college English teaching and the culture of the Central Plains. Based on the analysis of the current situation and causes of the penetration of Central Plains culture in college English teaching, this paper explores the principles and methods of penetrating Chinese culture into college English teaching. In college English teaching, it is necessary to adhere to the principles of moderation, balance and communication in integrating the basic knowledge of central plains culture. The methods are as follows: formulating scientific training program and reforming the existing teaching material system, improving the teachers' traditional cultural quality and enhancing their multicultural awareness, perfecting the content of cultural penetration and optimizing the teaching method, setting up a variety of elective courses concerning central plains culture and enriching the second classroom activities, creating a good learning environment to enhance the students' interest in learning central plains culture.

Keywords: Central Plains Culture; College English Teaching; Penetration; Principles and Methods

1. Introduction

Language and culture are inseparable. In his book *Language and Culture*, Kramersch [1] put forward that "language expresses, carries and symbolizes cultural reality." The relationship between language and culture has been

systematically discussed in foreign linguistics circles. Language is the carrier of culture and a mirror to reflect culture. The inseparable relationship between language and culture makes culture and language teaching inextricably linked. Byram, M. [2] advocated that culture and language learning could be integrated.

The researchers Guo Feng, Zhang Nan, Jiang Qing [3] put forward the phenomenon of "Aphasia" of Chinese culture in college English teaching. Chen Zhouyun, Tao Weiwei [4] pointed out that "foreign language teaching has paid more attention to the study of Western culture while ignoring the penetration of Chinese culture, resulting in a serious phenomenon of Chinese cultural aphasia." This hinders cultural transmission to a large extent. Moreover, the Central Plains culture represents Chinese culture to a certain extent. To enhance the soft power of the Central Plains culture, cultural inheritance and construction are indispensable. There are many colleges and universities in Henan province, so how to penetrate the Central Plains culture in college English teaching and insist on educating people with culture is a hot issue to be solved.

The researches on culture in China are mainly reflected in the following aspects :1) The establishment of research centers, such as the Central Plains Culture Research Center in Henan Province; 2) The establishment of academic journals, such as the "Research on Central Plains Culture" founded by Henan Academy of Social Sciences; 3) Publishing monographs, such as "Central Plains Culture and the Construction of Harmonious Society", "Henan Cultural Development Report" series books, "Central Plains Culture and the Rise of Central Plains", "Introduction to Central Plains Culture" etc.; 4) Publishing relevant academic papers.

Specifically, Wu Tao [5] elaborated on the connotations of Central Plains culture which was a big hit for the young audience. Zhao Xiufang [6] studied the penetration and translation of Chinese culture in college English teaching based on the output-oriented approach. Chen Fu, Lu Jia and Wang Xin [7] did a research on the integration of Chinese culture into college English teaching under the concept of OBC. Gao Xufeng [8] implanted the Chinese Culture in college English teaching from the cross-cultural perspective. Moreover, Guo Xiaohong and Xie Ping [9] explored the communication strategies of Chinese Culture in college English teaching from the perspective of short videos. Ma Xiqing [10] studied the penetration of Chinese Culture under the POA theory.

In summary, the interpretation and research of culture at home and abroad have achieved fruitful results, which provides theoretical and methodological guidance for the research of this subject. However, the research on the combination of the Central Plains culture penetration and language teaching is rarely involved, which is the reason why this essay takes the Central Plains culture penetration as the starting point for in-depth exploration.

The purpose of this study aims to promote the culture of the Central Plains by way of college English teaching, so that contemporary college students can have a deep understanding of the profound culture of the Central Plains. In teaching, the teacher should adopt a variety of means to improve students' awareness of the Central Plains culture, enhance the cultural pride of the students of their mother tongue, and cultivate students' ability to promote the Central Plains culture in English.

2. The Current Situation and Causes of the Penetration of Central Plains Culture

2.1 The Current Situation of the Penetration of Central Plains Culture

The researcher designed a questionnaire on the penetration of Central Plains culture to further understand students' attitudes and interests towards Central Plains culture and the infiltration status of Central Plains culture in current college English teaching. This questionnaire consists of 10 multiple choice questions. Students were asked to choose one answer from four choices for each question.

Then excel software is used to make statistics on the options provided by students to understand the students' familiarity with the Central Plains culture as a whole. A total of 136 questionnaires were issued and 130 valid questionnaires were recovered, including 30 for English majors and 100 for non-English majors.

According to the results of the questionnaire survey, no matter whether the English major students or non-English major students, most students feel it is difficult when understanding the Central Plains culture. As for the interest in expressing the knowledge of Central Plains culture in English, the researcher was more surprised that 54.00% of non-English majors were very interested in it, while only 16.67% of English majors were very interested in it. For non-English majors, 44.00% of them think it is very necessary and 50.00% of them think it is necessary to integrate the excellent traditional cultural knowledge of Central Plains into college English teaching. Among the English majors, 30.00% of the students think it is very necessary, 66.67% of the students think it is necessary. In addition, the survey found that the vast majority of students still recognized the role of the Central Plains culture in promoting foreign language learning. If there is a chance to communicate with Westerners, most students are willing to introduce the culture and customs of the Central Plains. As for expressing the Central Plains culture in English, the difficulties of English majors are mainly reflected in the lack of cultural knowledge which account for 33.33%, small vocabulary accounting for 33.33% and weak translation skills accounting for 26.67%.

The difficulties of non-English majors are reflected in the lack of cultural knowledge (22%), small vocabulary (41.00%) and weak translation skills (29.00%). As for the ways to get to know the Central Plains culture expressed in English, 26.67% of the English major students choose English textbooks as the sources, 30.00% prefer the Internet and 36.67% of the students think they learn from the teachers. The situation of non-English major students is mainly English textbooks (33.00%), online (32.00%), teachers teaching (33.00%). Taking non-English majors as an example, 38.00% of the students consider it frequent and 60.00% consider it infrequent

when college English teachers intersperse the knowledge of Central Plains culture in class, which reflects teachers' understanding of differences in the introduction of Chinese culture in lectures. Regarding the information related to the Central Plains culture in English textbooks, 75.00% of non-English majors think that it is not too much, while the proportion of English majors think that it is quite rare, reaching 86.67%. Take the classic college English course, the new version of New Horizons College English, as an example, only the after-class translation section adds Chinese-English translation practice to the Chinese culture. Last but not the least, almost all the students think that integrating the traditional Chinese culture into the English course has a helpful effect on the students' comprehensive English application ability.

2.2 The Causes of the Penetration of Central Plains Culture

As is well known, the traditional college English teaching mainly focuses on the eastward dissemination of western learning, while the westward dissemination of Chinese culture is less referred. Nowadays people have realized that English is not only a means of testing students, but also a tool of communication. In order to improve the students' intercultural communication competence and application ability, it is not only necessary to improve students' English language competence, but also to help students absorb a large amount of traditional cultural knowledge. However, in college English teaching, the textbooks mainly introduce the culture of English-speaking countries, so that most college students are quite familiar with western cultural knowledge, but lack words on how to express the local culture in English. Some teachers have realized the importance of disseminating local culture and they will consciously add some introduction of Central China culture in their teaching, but such introduction is mostly not systematic and coherent. In addition, the knowledge of local culture was not included in the course assessment in the final exam. It was not until the formulation of the new syllabus of CET-4 and CET-6 that the translation of paragraphs of Chinese culture was added, which attracted the attention of college students. While this kind of emphasis is mainly for the purpose of

examination, and most students yet have not realized the importance of learning and spreading the local culture.

Based on the above situation, it's of urgent significance to explore the causes behind it and the factors to be considered. Moreover, the survey concerning the college students' Central Plains culture learning and the data shows that there are still quite a few students who are not interested in expressing the knowledge of Central Plains culture in English. Although the students has already realized the role of Central Plains culture in promoting foreign language learning, due to the lack of cultural knowledge, small vocabulary, weak translation skills and other reasons, the students' grasp of Chinese culture is not ideal. The students' ignorance of the Central Plains culture and traditional culture will undoubtedly affect the improvement of their intercultural communication ability. In addition, the current college students are utilitarian and practical, which also affects the improvement of their English translation ability of the Central Plains culture. In addition, there are great differences in the teachers' integration into the cultural knowledge of the Central Plains due to the lack of knowledge about the Central Plains in the textbooks. Some English teachers also admit that their ability to translate the original culture into English needs to be improved. What's more, the classroom teaching method is relatively simple and needs to be further improved in the way of penetration.

3. The Principles of Penetration of Central Plains Culture in College English Teaching

In college English teaching, it is necessary to adhere to the principles of moderation, balance and communication in integrating the knowledge of Central Plains culture. The principles of moderation means that the amount of cultural knowledge of the Central Plains should be infiltrated into college English teaching, and the proportion of cultural knowledge promotion between China and the West should be coordinated. After all, the main goal of college English teaching is to learn English language knowledge and cultivate the students' comprehensive English application ability. The principle of balance is to strengthen the study of western culture while integrating the knowledge of Central Plains culture. The principle of communication is to

let students know how to express the Central Plains culture. Its goal is to develop the students' intercultural communicative ability. Therefore, the improved communicative competence is helpful to carry forward the Central Plains culture, improve cultural self-confidence, enhance cultural soft power, and help Henan move forward to become a strong cultural province.

4. Methods of the Penetration of the Central Plains Culture in College English Teaching

4.1 Formulating a Scientific Training Program and Reforming the Existing Teaching Material System

According to the actual situation, the colleges should make scientific training program. Especially for newly-established application-oriented universities, they should combine their own development with local cultural characteristics and set up majors in a reasonable way. Based on the conducted empirical investigation, it's wise to reform the existing teaching material system in view of the fact that most students think that there is little information about the culture of Central Plains in college English textbooks. Relevant departments of the Ministry of Education or personnel of colleges and universities shall compile English textbooks to introduce the culture of the Central Plains, or integrate relevant contents of the culture of the Central Plains into English textbooks. Because whether for English major students or non-English major students, the current college English teaching is still based on textbooks. Only when the Central Plains culture is integrated into college English textbooks will teachers and students pay more attention to it. Therefore, the present primary task is to reform the existing English textbooks systems and appropriately add the content of Chinese traditional culture into the textbooks. College English course is not only a course to impart basic language knowledge, but also a quality-oriented education course to understand world culture and spread excellent traditional culture. The colleges should spread traditional culture, integrate Chinese civilization and culture into textbooks, and make students more familiar with traditional Chinese culture by comparing Chinese and Western cultures.

4.2 Improving the Teachers' Traditional Cultural Literacy and Enhancing Their Multicultural Awareness

In foreign language teaching, although students are the main body of learning, the role of teachers cannot be ignored. The teachers are disseminators of knowledge and culture. Teachers' mastery of traditional culture has a great influence on the students' learning, therefore, if teachers want to change their teaching concept and have multicultural consciousness, they must continue to study and improve their traditional cultural quality. In their spare time, they can read some books that are helpful to improve their traditional culture, such as *The Analects of Confucius*, *Tao Te Ching*, *Mencius*, etc. There are also many books on the culture of the Central Plains, such as *The Construction of Central Plains Culture and Harmonious Society*, *Interpretation of Central Plains Culture*, and *The Rise of Central Plains Culture*, etc. Reading through these books, one can have a deeper understanding of the culture of the Central Plains. Only when teachers improve their traditional cultural quality can they influence students by their words and deeds. Only teachers with profound bilingual cultural knowledge can impart knowledge in classroom teaching and make a comparative analysis between mother tongue and target language culture, so as to better infiltrate Central Plains culture into college English teaching.

4.3 Perfecting the Content of Cultural Penetration and Optimizing the Teaching Method

As the core of Chinese culture, the Central Plains culture has a long history and rich connotation. Only reasonable selection of teaching content can make the Central Plains culture permeate effectively in college English teaching. As college English teachers, they should always explain and infiltrate the cultural aspects of Central Plains that students are interested in, such as food culture, folk culture, martial arts culture, etc., based on the actual situation of students. In the process of teaching, teachers can adopt flexible and diversified teaching methods, especially some cultural teaching methods, such as cultural penetration, comparative analysis, fusion, addition, interaction and role deduction. In teaching, teachers can also introduce the

cultural background knowledge of the content they teach, compare and analyze the cultural differences between China and the West, and consciously integrate cultural teaching objectives according to the content of textbooks, so that students can acquire relevant cultural knowledge in a subtle way.

As an additional content of teaching, teachers can systematically add some content of Central Plains cultural knowledge to guide students to participate in class discussions, so as to mobilize the students' interest in learning. In addition, some students find it difficult to express the Central Plains culture in English due to the following factors, such as lack of cultural knowledge, small vocabulary and weak translation skills, therefore, the teachers can take these aspects as the breakthrough point. In college English teaching, they should interpret the cultural words, give students related cultural knowledge and translation techniques, and contrast between Chinese and western culture, which will greatly expand the students' horizon and also improve the students' ability of dialectical thinking.

4.4 Setting up a Variety of Elective Courses Concerning Central Plains Culture and Enriching the Second Classroom Activities

Due to the lack of English courses on Chinese culture and the Central Plains culture in the current curriculum, the students' attention to the Central Plains culture is greatly affected. Even if they want to learn about it, they have no way to start. Therefore, the opening of such courses must arouse the students' interest in learning the Central Plains culture. During the study of the elective course, the students can watch video clips containing rich culture of the Central Plains, and make comparison between Chinese and Western cultures. Students can be taught to express the culture-loaded words of the Central Plains in English while learning the Central Plains culture, so as to show the charm of the Central Plains culture. The elective course also focuses on the Central Plains culture in the examination scheme, such learning will for sure help the students grasp a lot of cultural knowledge. In addition, teachers can make use of the second classroom to organize various forms of competition, such as Chinese culture contest, the cultural translation contest, the Central Plains culture English story contest etc. The various forms of

activities will be gradually cultivating the students' consciousness and the ability of learning and spreading the culture.

4.5 Creating a Good Learning Environment to Enhance the Students' Interest in Learning Central Plains Culture

Students are the main body of learning. In order to let students be interested in the learning of Central Plains culture, teachers need to create a good learning environment. In class teaching, teachers can introduce periodicals and books related to the culture of the Central Plains to students, encourage students to learn more about the culture of the Central Plains through the media in their spare time, and watch some programs related to the culture of the Central Plains, such as delicious food programs, Li Yuan Chun, Shaolin Heroes, etc., so that students can feel the charm of the culture of the Central Plains. After class, the university can use the school newspaper, broadcast, network and other ways to promote the knowledge about the Central Plains culture to students, and deepen the students' sense of identity to the Central Plains culture. Another way is to carry out a variety of extracurricular activities, for example, debate competitions among colleges can be based on culture, such as the debate between Central Plains culture and foreign culture, the inheritance and innovation of Central Plains culture, etc. , or hold some cultural activities like the tea culture concerning the Central Plains. Through the development of these activities, students can deeply understand the importance of the Central Plains culture. In addition, the students' translation ability and promotion of Central Plains culture awareness can be greatly improved.

5. Conclusion

Language and culture are inextricably linked. In college English teaching, the penetration of Central Plains culture is conducive to the realization of English teaching objectives, the improvement of the students' cross-cultural communication ability and traditional cultural literacy, the enhancement of cultural confidence, and the inheritance of Central Plains culture. In addition, the penetration of Central Plain culture in college English teaching should follow the principles of moderation, communication as well as balance.

Language is a window to open the heart. Therefore, it's of significance to improve the students' ability to express Central Plains culture in English and let them learn to express our own culture in English. In this way, students can act as ambassadors of Central Plains culture, let Central Plains culture go out and enhance Henan's cultural soft power. In a word, this is an innovative thing in theory and feasible thing in practice, which is worthy of further promotion and application.

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